

REMARKS

I. Formalities

Claims 27-31 have been elected herein, with traverse.

II. Response to the Restriction Requirement

A restriction of Applicants' claims was required under 35 U.S.C. §121 from among the following species alleged to exist in the application:

- I. Embodiment 1 of FIG. 3; and
- II. Embodiment 2 of FIG. 4.

As an initial matter, Applicants point out that additional embodiments are also contemplated within claims 22-31. Specifically, the embodiments of FIGs. 1 and 2 are not referenced by the Office Action. In the listing of claims that follows, Applicants will refer to the embodiment of FIG. 1 as Embodiment 3, and the embodiment of FIG. 2 as Embodiment 4.

Claims 22-31 remain in the pending patent application following an earlier restriction requirement, with traverse, filed on August 23, 2004. Of these, claims 22-24 and 26 read on Embodiment 3 (FIG. 1); claims 22, 23, 25, and 26 read on Embodiment 4 (FIG. 2); claims 27-31 read on Embodiment 1 (FIG. 3); and claims 27-31 read on Embodiment 2 (FIG. 4).

As required by the Office Action, Applicants elect, subject to a traverse that follows hereafter, to prosecute the method claims of Embodiment 1, i.e., claims 27-31.

Applicants traverse the subject restriction requirement on the grounds that maintaining the Restriction Requirement and forcing Applicants to file a divisional application to include the non-elected claims only serves to increase the workload upon the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and to increase the expenses incurred by Applicants. Accordingly, maintaining the present Restriction Requirement does not benefit anyone.

Also, it is noted that restriction is never mandatory and is discretionary under 35 U.S.C. §121 only when "two or more independent and distinct" inventions are claimed. It is respectfully

submitted that the restriction requirement should be removed because there is not even alleged a valid ground under 35 U.S.C. 121 for exercising the Commissioner's discretion in requiring the restriction. Applicants submit that examination on the merits of each of claims 22-31 would not be significantly more burdensome than the examination on the merits of claims 27-31.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the Restriction Requirement should be removed. Although the election of the claims of Embodiment 1, i.e., claims 27-31, is affirmed, the Restriction Requirement is respectfully traversed, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the requirement for restriction is respectfully requested.

No fees are believed to be due with this Response to Office Action. However, the Commissioner for Patents is hereby authorized to charge any fees due by reason of this paper, or credit any overpayment, to Account No. 02-4467.

If there are matters that can be discussed by telephone to further the prosecution of this application, Applicants invite Examiner Vu to call the undersigned attorney at the Examiner's convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent.

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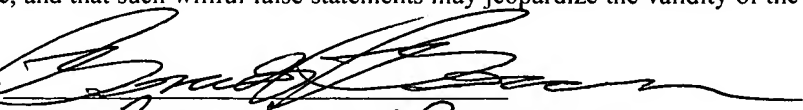
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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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